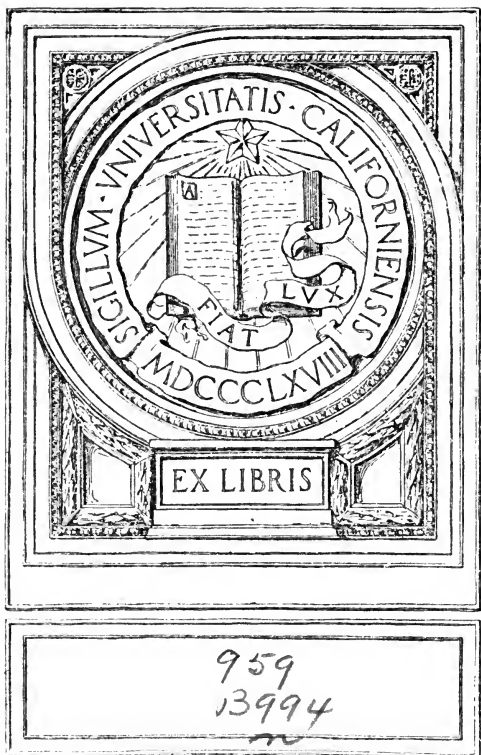


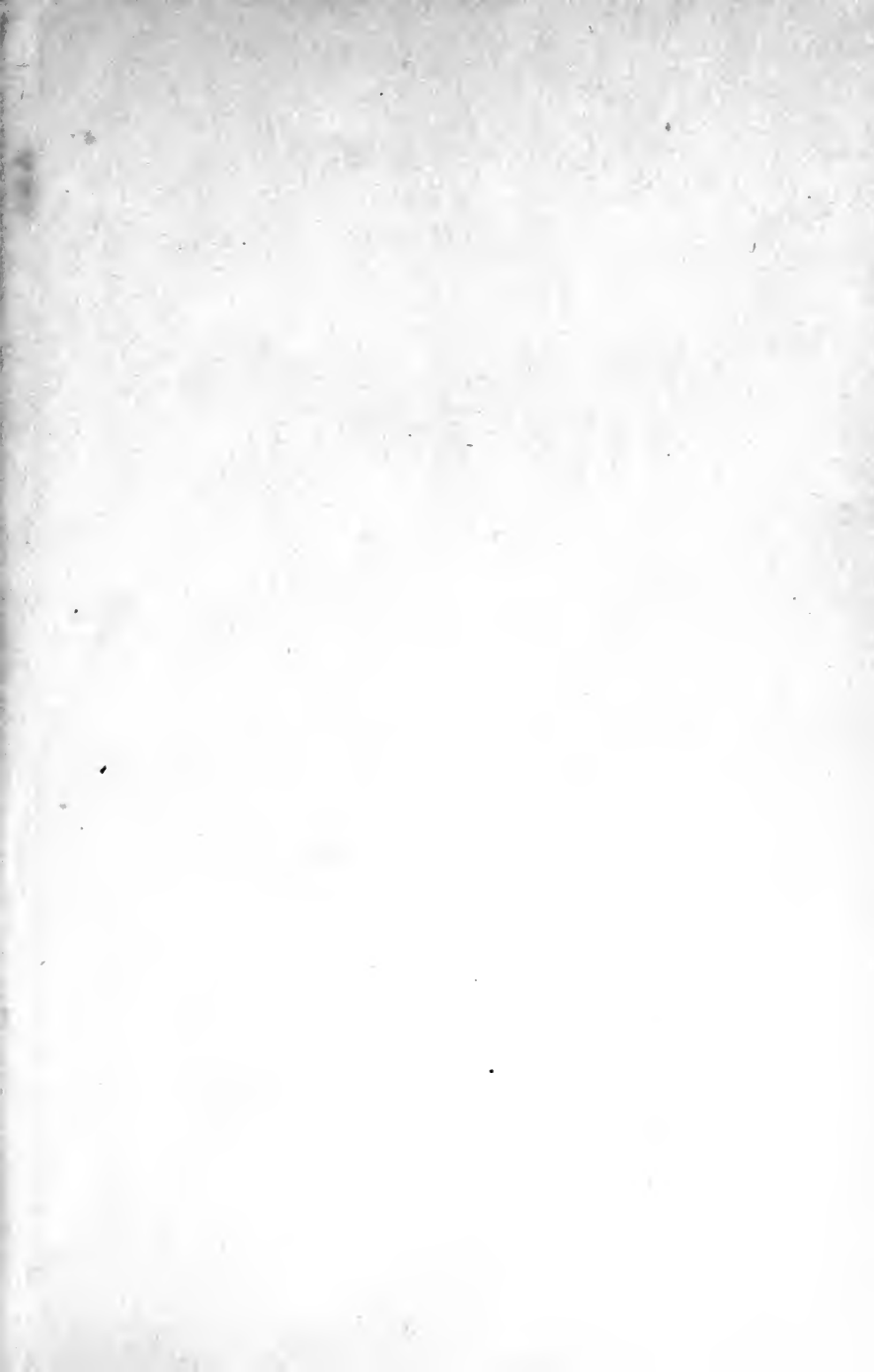
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WITTER BYNNER

THE NEW WORLD

WITTER BYNNER

*Into Celia's heart have come the graces of many women, into her
words the wisdom of many men, as stars into the one heaven.*



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MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO CELIA KEAYS

Celia, when you call to me
Good morning, I awake
Quick again on your account,
Eager for your sake.
Yet at morning or at noon
In the clearest light,
Is there any voice as near
As your voice at night?
Or has anyone alive
Ever come and said
Anything as intimate
As you are saying, dead?



THE NEW WORLD



I

Celia was laughing. Hopefully I said:
“How shall this beauty that we share,
This love, remain aware
Beyond our happy breathing of the air?
How shall it be fulfilled and perfected? . . .
If you were dead,
How then should I be comforted?”

But Celia knew instead:
“He who finds beauty here, shall find it there.”
A halo gathered round her hair.
I looked and saw her wisdom bare
The living bosom of the countless dead.
. . . And there
I laid my head.

Again when Celia laughed, I doubted her and
said:
“Life must be led

In many ways more difficult to see

Than this immediate way

For you and me.

We stand together on our lake's edge, and the
mystery

Of love has made us one, as day is made of
night and night of day.

Aware of one identity

Within each other, we can say:

'I shall be everything you are.' . . .

We are uplifted till we touch a star.

We know that overhead

Is nothing more austere, more starry, or more
deep to understand

Than is our union, human hand in hand.

. . . . But over our lake come strangers—a
crowded launch, a lonely sailing boy.

A mile away a train bends by. In every car

Strangers are travelling, each with particular

And unkind preference like ours, with privacy
Of understanding, with especial joy

Like ours. Celia, Celia, why should there be
Distrust between ourselves and them, disunity?

. . . . How careful we have been

To trim this little circle that we tread,

To set a bar

To strangers and forbid them! — Are they not
as we,

Our very likeness and our nearest kin?

How can we shut them out and let stars in?"

She looked along the lake. And when I
heard her speak,

The sun fell on the boy's white sail and her
white cheek.

"I touch them all through you," she said. "I
cannot know them now

Deeply and truly as my very own, except
through you,

Except through one or two

Interpreters.

But not a moment stirs

Here between us, binding and interweaving us,
That does not bind these others to our care."

The sunlight fell in glory on her hair. . . .
And then said Celia, radiant, when I held her
near:

"They who find beauty there, shall find it here."

And on her brow,

When I heard Celia speak,

Cities were populous

With peace and oceans echoed glories in her ear,
And from her risen thought
Her lips had brought,
As from some peak
Down through the clouds, a mountain-air
To guide the lonely and uplift the weak.

“Record it all,” she told me, “more than
merely this,
More than the shine of sunset on our heads,
more than a kiss,
More than our rapt agreement and delight
Watching the mountain mingle with the
night. . . .

Tell that the love of two incurs
The love of multitudes, makes way
And welcome for them, as a solitary star
Brings on the great array.
Go make a lovers’ calendar,”
She said, “for every day.”

And when the sun had put away
His dazzle, over the shadowy firs
The solitary star came out. . . . So on some
night
To eyes of youth shall come my light
And hers.

II

"Where are you bound, O solemn voyager?"
She laughed one day and asked me in her mirth:
"Where are you from?
Why are you come?"

. . . . The questions beat like tapping of a
drum;

And how could I be dumb,
I who have bugles in me? Fast
The answer blew to her,
For all my breath was worth. . . .
"As a bird comes by grace of spring,
You are my journey and my wing —
And into your heart, O Celia,
My heart has flown, to sing
Solemn and long
A most undaunted song."

This was the song that she herself had taught
me how to sing:

. . . As immigrants come toward America

On their continual ships out of the past,
So on my ship America have I, by birth,
Come forth at last
From all the bitter corners of the earth.
And I have ears to hear the westward wind
blowing

And I have eyes to look beyond the scope
Of sea

And I have hands to touch the hands
Of shipmates who are going
Wherever I go and the grace of knowing
That what for them is hope
Is hope for me.

I come from many times and many lands,
I look toward life and all that it shall hold,
Past bound and past divide.

And I shall be consoled
By a continent as wide
As the round invisible sky. 1

. . . . "The unseen shall become the seen. . . .

O Celia, be the Queen —
The Genoan am I! "

And Celia cried:
"My jewels, they are yours,
Yours for the journey. Use them well.

Go find the new world, win the shores
Of which the old books tell!

. . . . Yet will they listen, poet? Will they
sail with you?

Will they not call you dreamer of a dream?
Will they not laugh at you, because you seem
Concerned with words that people often say
And deeds they never do? "

The bright sails of my caravel shook seaward
in reply:

" Though I be told
A thousand facts to hold
Me back, though the old boundary
Rise up like hatred in my way,
Though fellow-voyagers cry,
' A lie! '—

Here as I come with heaven at my side,
None of the weary words they say
Remain with me,
I am borne like a wave of the sea
Toward worlds to be. . . .
And, young and bold,
I am happier than they —
The timid unbelievers who grow old! "

She interceded: "How impatient, how unkind

You are! What secret do you know
To keep you young?

Age comes with keen and accurate advance
Against youth's lightly handled lance.

Age is an ancient despot that has wrung
All hearts." . . . My answer was the song forever sung:

"This that I need to know I know —
Onpouring and perpetual immigrants,
We join a fellowship beyond America
Yet in America. . . .

Beyond the touch of age, my Celia,
In you, in me, in everyone, we join God's
growing mind.

For in no separate place or time, or soul, we find
Our meaning. In one mingled soul reside
All times and places. On a tide
Of mist and azure air

We journey toward that soul, through circumstance,

Until at last we fully care and dare
To make within ourselves divinity."

“ And what of all the others,” Celia said,
“ Who ventured brave as you? What of the
dead? ”

Again I saw the halo in her hair
And said: “ The dead sail forward, hid behind
This wave that we ourselves must mount to find
The eternal way.

Adventurers of long ago
Seeking a richer gain than earthy gold,
They have left for us, half-told,
Their guesses of the port, more numerous and
blind

Than their unnumbered and forgotten faces.
. . . And though today, as then,
Death is a wind blowing them forward out of
sight and out of mind,

Yet in familiar and in unfamiliar places
Inquiring by what means I may
The destination of the wind
Of death, I have found signs and traces
Of the way they go

And with a quicker heart I have beheld again
In visions, from my ship at sea,
The great new world confronting me,

Where, yesterday,
Today, tomorrow, dwell my countrymen."

☐ And then I looked away,
Over the pasture and the valley, to the New
Hampshire town. . . .
And my heart's acclaim went down,
To Florida, Wisconsin, California,
And brought a good report to Celia:
" My ship America,
This whole wide-timbered land,
Well captained and well manned,
Ascends the sea
Of time, carrying me
And many passengers.
And every cabin stirs
With the pulsing of its engine over the sway of
time,
Yes, every state and city, every village, every
farm,
And every heart and everyone's right arm.
. . . Celia, hold out your hand,
Or anyone in any field or street, hold out your
hand —

And I can see it pulse the massive climb
And dip
Of this America,
My ship! "

" Why make your ship so small?
Can this America contain them all? "

How wisely I replied
In the province of my pride:
" But these are my own shipmates, these
Who share my ship America with me!
. . . On many seas
On other ships, old India, China, Greece,
Have other immigrants put out for peace.
But these are my own shipmates whom I see
At hand — these are my company."

" What have you said," she cried,
" Thinking you knew?
Whom have you called your shipmates? You
were wrong!

Your ship is strong
With a more various crew
Than any one man's country could provide,
To make it ride
So high and manifold and so complete.

This is the engine-beat
Of life itself, the ship of ships.
There is no other ship among the stars than
this.

The wind of death is a bright kiss
Upon the lips
Of every immigrant, as upon yours and mine —
Theirs is the stinging brine
And sun and open sea,
And theirs the arching sky, eternity."

And Celia had my homage. I was wrong.
Immigrants all, one ship we ride
On a single tide
The journey through.

"My shipmates are as many as eternity is long:
The unborn and the living and the dead —
And, Celia, you!"

III

That midnight when the moon was tall
I walked alone by the white lake — yet with a
 vanished race
And with a race unborn. To walk with dead
 men is to pray,
To walk with unborn men — to find the way.

I have seen various days. That night I
 watched them all.
I have seen many a sign and trace
Of beauty and of hope:
An elm at night; an arrowy waterfall;
The illimitable round unbroken scope
Of life; a friend's unfrightened dying face.

Though I have heard the cry of fear in
 crowded loneliness of space,
Dead laughter from the lips of lust,
Anger from fools, falsehood from sycophants
(My fear, my lips, my anger, my disgrace),

Though I have held a golden cup and tasted
rust,

Seen cities dare to be defiled
By the bright-fevered and consuming sin
Of making only coin and lives to count it in,
Yet once I watched with Celia,
Watched on a ferry an Italian child,
One whom America
Had changed.

His cheek was hardy and his mouth was frail
For sweetness, and his eyes were opening wild
As with wonder at an unseen figure carrying a
grail.

Perhaps he faced, as I did in his glance,
The spirit of the living dead who, having
ranged

Through long reverses, forward without fail
Carry deliverance
From privilege and disinheritance . . .
Until their universal soul shall prove
The only answer to the ache of love.

“America was wistful in that child,”
Said Celia afterwards — and smiled
Because all three of us were immigrants,

Each voyaging into each.

Over the city-roofs, the sun awoke
Bright in the dew
Of a marvellous morning, while she spoke
Of the sun, the dew, the wonder, in a child:
"He who devises tyranny," she said,
"Denies the resurrection of the dead,
Beneath his own degree degrades himself,
Invades himself with ugliness and wars.
But he who knows all men to be himself,
Part of his own experiment and reach,
Humbles and amplifies himself
To build and share a tenement of stars."

Once when we broke a loaf of bread
And shared the honey, Celia said:
"To share all beauty as the interchanging dust,
To be akin and kind and to entrust
All men to one another for their good,
Is to have heard and understood,
And carried to the common enemy
In you and me,
The ultimatum of democracy."

“ But to what goal? ” I wondered. And I
heard her happy speech :

“ It is my faith that God is our own dream
Of perfect understanding of the soul.
It is my passion that, alike through me
And every member of eternity,
The source of God is sending the same stream.
It is my peace that when my life is whole,
God’s life shall be completed and supreme.”

And once when I had made complaint
About America, she warned me : “ Be not faint
Of heart, but bold to see the soul’s advance.
The chances are not far nor few. . . .
Face beauty,” Celia said, “ then beauty faces
you.”

And under all things her advice was true.
. . . Discovering what she knew,
Not only on a mountainous place
Or by the solving sea
But through the world I have seen endless
beauty, as the number grows
Of those who, in a child cheated of simple joy

Or in a wasted rose
Or in a lover's immemorial lonely eyes
Or in machines that quicken and destroy
A multitude or in a mother's unregarded grace
And broken heart, through all the skies
And all humanity,
Seek out the single spirit, face to face,
Find it, become a conscious part of it
And know that something pure and exquisite,
Although inscrutably begun,
Exalts the many into one.

“ I shall not lose, nor you,”
I said to Celia. Over the world the morning-
dew
Moved like a hymn and sang to us: “ Go now,
fulfill
Your destiny and joy;
Each in the other, both in that Italian boy,
And he in you, like flowers in a hill! ”
. . . She was the nearness of imperfect God
On whom in her perfection was at work.
Lest I should shirk

My share, I asked her for his blessing and his
nod —

And his breath was in her shining hair like the
wind in golden-rod.

“ But, Celia, Celia, tell me what to be,”
I asked, “ and what to do,
To keep your faith in me,
To witness mine in you! ”

She answered: “ Dare to see
In every man and woman everywhere
The making of us two.
See none that we can spare
From the creation of our soul.
Swear to be whole.
Let not your faith abate,
But establish it in persons and exalt it in the
state.”

IV

Celia has challenged me. . . .
Be my reply,
Challenge to poets who, with tinkling tricks,
Meet life and pass it by.
“Beauty,” they ask, “in politics?”
“If you put it there,” say I.

Wide the new world had opened its bright
gates.
And a woman who had heard of the new world
All her life long and had saved her pence
By hard frugality, to be her competence
In the free home, came eagerly in nineteen
seven
Into These States,
With her little earnings furled
In a large handkerchief — but with a heart
Too rich to be contained, for she had done her
part:
She had come

With faith to Heaven.

But there was a panic that year,
No work, no wages in These States.
And a great fear
Seized on the immigrant. And so she took her
pence
All of them, furled
Safe in her handkerchief, to 'a government
cashier —
A clerk in the post-office. (And he relates
Her errand as a joke, yet tenderly
For I watched him telling me.)
. . . Not knowing English, being dumb,
She had brought with her a thin-faced lad
To interpret. And he made it clear,
While she unfurled
Her handkerchief and poured the heap of coins
out of her hand,
That 'she was giving all she had —
To be used no matter how, you understand' . . .
Lest harm should come to the new world.

O doubters of democracy,
Undo your mean contemptuous art! —

More than in all that poetry has said,
More than in mound or marble, in the living
 live the dead.

The past has done its reproductive part.
Hear now the cry of beauty's present needs,
Of comrades levelling a thousand creeds,
Finding futility
In conflict, selfishness, hardness of heart!
Love has had many poets who can see
Ascending in the sky
Above the shadowy passes
The everlasting hills: humanity.

O doubters of the time to be,
What is this might, this mystery,
Moving and singing through democracy,
This music of the masses
And of you and me —
But purging and dynamic poetry! —
What is this eagerness from sea to sea
But young divinity!

I have seen doubters, with a puny joy,
Accept amusement for their little while

And feed upon some nourishing employ
But otherwise shake their wise heads and
smile —

Protesting that one man can no more move the
mass

For good or ill

Than could the ancients kindle the sun

By tying torches to a wheel and rolling it down-
hill.

But not the wet circumference of the seas
Can quench the living light in even these,
These who forget,
Eating the fruits of earth,
That nothing ever has been done
To spur the spirit of mankind,
Which has not come to pass
Forth from the heart and mind
Of some one man, through other men birth
after birth,
In thoughts that dare
And in deeds that share
And in a will resolved to find
A finer breath
Born in the deep maternity of death.

. . . If these be ecstasies of youth,
Yet they are news of which all time has
 need.

If they be lies, tell them yourselves and heed
How poets' twice-told lies become the truth!

There was a poet Celia loved who, hearing all
 around

The multitudinous tread

Of common majesty,

(A hearty immigrant was he!)

Made of the gathering insurgent sound

Another continent of poetry.

"His name is writ in his blood, mine and yours,"

She said. "And when he celebrates

These States,

How can Americans worth their salt

But listen to the wavesong on their shores,

The waves and Walt,

And hear the windsong over rock and wood,

The winds and Walt,

And let the mansong enter at their gates

And know that it is good!"

Walt Whitman, by his perfect friendliness
Has let me guess
That into Celia, into me,
He and unnumbered dead have come
To be our intimates,
To make of us their home
Commingling earth and heaven. . . .
That by our true and mutual deeds
We shall at last be shriven
Of these hypocrisies and jealous creeds
And petty separate fates —
That I in every man and he in me,
Together making God, are gradually creating
 whole
The single soul.

 Somebody called Walt Whitman dead.
He is alive instead,
Alive as I am. When I lift my head,
His head is lifted. When his brave mouth
 speaks,
My lips contain his word. And when his rocker
 creaks
Ghostly in Camden, there I sit in it and watch
 my hand grow old

And take upon my constant lips the kiss of
younger truth. . . .

It is my joy to tell and to be told

That he, in all the world and me,

Cannot be dead,

That I, in all the world and him, youth after
youth

Shall lift my head.

V.

There is a vision, Celia, in your face. . . .

Beauty had lived in India like a mad
And withdrawn prophetess, in Greece had set
her pace
Between a laurelled lad
And a singing maiden, pitched her purple tents
In Rome, leaned with a mother's fears
In Bethlehem to nurse a son of God upon her
breast
And learned the tender loneliness of tears,
Awhile had hid in Europe, sad
In the shadow of magnificence,
Brooding, finding no rest;
And then of a sudden she had run forth from
her hiding-place,
Rejoicing, desperate, intense
Against her enemy, a rod
Of fire in her hand, her tresses crowned
With liberty, her purpose bold and bound

That every son should be a son of God.
And then she wept for France. . . . But once
 more clad
In stars, she beckoned to America, the land
Of hope. Behold her stand
With her bright finger scorning armaments
And on her lips the unconquerable common
 sense
Of love calling the world to challenge and con-
 found
The empty idols of her enemy!
. . . Comforter of experience,
Enlightener of old events,
She dares to widen and to recommence
Her way, singing the resurrection of the dead,
Carrying banners of the time to be,
Calling companions to her high command.

There is a banner, Celia, in your hand!

Though sons, whose fathers bled
For freedom, struggle now instead
With heavier weapons and with weary-waking
 head

For bread;

Though sons, whose fathers fought in other
ages

For fame, bear in their hearts today the scar
Of entering where the laborer sleeps

And rousing him with masterly inquiry where
he keeps

His wages:

Though all the cunning coil of trade appear a
baser thing

Than battles are,

O trace through time the orbit of this troubled
star!

. . . See, from afar off, how the lordly few
Of old were greaved and helmeted

To practise inconclusive feud

Upon no battlefield of unfeeling dew —

But on the prostrate stillness of the multitude!

Even their knightliest prowess they must rear,

Tamerlane, Alexander, Arthur, every king,

Upon the common clay from which they spring.

For see how slaves, on whom war falls, renew

The strength of war and disappear

Year after year

Into the earth — fulfilling it to form and bear
Democracy!

Look nearer now along the modern sky
And watch where every man fastens the electric
wing

Upon his foot, that he may leave his little sod
Of ignorance!

And look where, by and by,
Taking his high inheritance,
He knows himself and other men as the winged
self of God!

☐ The times are gone when only few were fit
To face directly the sublime,
When for the rest an altar-rail sufficed
To hide the intimate Christ. . . .
Perceiving now his gift, demanding it,
The bread and wine of common benefit,
Men, women, all,
Interpreters of time,
Have found that lordly Christ apocryphal
While Christ the comrade comes again — no
wraith
Of virtue in a far-off faith
But a companion hearty, natural,

Who sorrows with indomitable eyes
For his mistreated plan
To share with all men the upspringing sod,
The unfolding skies —
No God who made Himself a man,
But a man who, proving human worth,
Could make himself a god.

Once you had listened, Celia, to a stream
And lain a long time, silent as a sleeper.
And then your word arrived as from beyond
Your body, bending with its breath the frond
Of a fern. You whispered to the listening
stream:

“As evil is yet wider than we dream,
So good is deeper.” . . .

O how I try to bring
Your voice to say in mine that word! — to sing
Clear-hearted as a mountain-spring
Of the wonders we see deepening!

Time cannot bury what the blest have
thought,
For there is resurrection far and near.

Often it seems as though a single day had
brought
To each bright hemisphere
Courage to cast
The servitude
And blinded glory of the past
Away and in a flash had taught
Purpose and fortitude. . . .

But not so swiftly are we wrought.
By many single days we learn to live,
By many flashes read the vision clear
That every heart is equal debtor
To its own and every breast
For the good before the better,
The better toward the best.

When we who hugged awhile the golden
bowl
Of greed behold it now a sieve
Through which is drained invisibly
A nectar we were saving for the soul,
Then not in vain have many gone
The empty ways of stealth
Seeking a firmer base than honesty
For building happiness upon. . . .

But by the ancient agonizing test
We have slowly guessed
That a just portion of the whole
Is all there is of wealth.

When those who labor wake
And care . . .
And through the tingling air
A dead man's voice, by living men renewed
And women, dares democracy
To self-respect: "Open the lands! Let man-
kind share
The ample livelihood they bear!"—
Then not in vain have the poor known distress,
Teaching the rich that happiness
Is something no man may — possess.

Little by little we, whose fathers fought
Impassioned, are ashamed
Of the familiar thought
That waste of blood is honourable feud:
Little by little from the wondering land
The agitation and the lie of war
Shall pass; for in the heart disclaimed
Murder shall be abandoned by the hand.

And while there grows a fellowship of un-
shed blood

To stop the wound and heal the scar
Of time — with sudden glorious aptitude,
Woman assumes her part. Her pity in a flood
Flings down the gate.

She has been made to wait
Too long, undreaming and untaught
The touch and beauty of democracy.
But, entering now the strife
In which her saving sense is due,
She watches and she grows aware,
Holding a child more dear than property,
That the many perish to empower the few,
That homeless politics have split apart
The common country of the human heart.
(Your heart is beating, Celia, like a song!)

. . . . For man has need
Not merely of the lips that kiss and hands that
feed

But of the hearts that heed
And of the minds that speed
Like rain.

Loving a mother or a wife,
Let him release her tenderness, to make him
strong,

And use her beauty and receive her law:
The very life of life.

In temporary pain
The age is bearing a new breed
Of men and women, patriots of the world
And one another. Boundaries in vain,
Birthrights and countries, would constrain
The old diversity of seed
To be diversity of soul.

O mighty patriots, maintain
Your loyalty! — till flags unfurled
For battle shall arraign
The traitors who unfurled them, shall remain
And shine over an army with no slain,
And men from every nation shall enroll
And women — in the hardihood of peace!

What can my anger do but cease?
Whom shall I fight and who shall be my enemy
When he is I and I am he?

Let me have done with that old God outside
Who watched with preference and answered
prayer,

The Godhead that replied
Now here, now there,
Where heavy cannon were
Or coins of gold!
Let me receive communion with all men,
Acknowledging our one and only soul!
For not till then
Can God be God, till we ourselves are whole.

VI

Once in a smoking-car, I saw a scene
That made my blood stand still. . . .
While the sun smouldered in a great ravine,
And I, with elbow on the window-sill,
Was watching the dim ember of the west,
Half-heard, but poignant as a bell
For fire, there came to me the voice of one
in hell.

I turned. Across the car were two young
men,
Yet hardly more than boys,
French by their look, and brothers,
And one was moaning on the other's breast.
His face was bent away. I could not tell
What words he said, half English and half
French. I only knew
Both men were suffering, not one but two.
And then that face came into view,
Gaunt and unshaved, with shadows and wild
eyes,

A face of madness and of desolation. And his
cries,

For all his mate could do,
Rang out, a shrill and savage noise,
And tears ran down the stubble of his cheek.

The other face was younger, clean and sad
With the manful stricken beauty of a lad
Who had intended always to be glad.

. . . . The touch of his compassion, like a
mother's,

Pitied the madman, soothed him and caressed.

And then I heard him speak,

In a low voice: "Mon frère, mon frère!

Calme-toi! Right here's your place."

And, opening his coat, he pressed

Upon his heart the wanderer's face

And smoothed the tangled hair.

After a moment peaceful there,

The maniac screamed — struck out and fell

Across his brother's arm. Love could not quell

His anger. Wrists together high in air

He rose and with a yell

Brought down his handcuffs toward his brother's
face —

But his hands were pinned below his waist,

By a burly, silent sheriff, and some hideous
 thing was bound
Around his arms and feet
And he was laid upon the narrow seat.
And then that sound,
That moan
Of one forsaken and alone!
"Seigneur! Le createur du ciel et de la terre!
Forgotten me! Forgotten me!"
. . . . And when the voice grew weak,
The brother leaned again, embraced
The huddled body. But a shriek
Repulsed him: "Non! Détache-moi! I don't
 care
For you. Non! Tu es l'homme qui m'a trahi!
Non! Tu n'es pas mon frère!"

But as often as that stricken mind would fill
With the great anguish and the rush of hate,
The boy, his young eyes older, older,
Would curve his shoulder
To the other's pain and hold that haunted face
 close to his face
And say: "O wait!
You will know me better by and by.

Mon pauvre petit, be still!

Right here's your place."

. . . . The gleam! and then the blinded stare,

The cry:

"Non, tu n'es pas mon frère!"

I saw myself, myself, as blind

As he. And something smothers

My reason. And I do not know my brothers. . . .

But every day declare:

"Non, tu n'es pas mon frère!"

Yet in the outcome, I can see. . . .

Closer than any brother

Shall they be to one another

And to me,

Closer than mother, father, daughter, son,

O closer than a lover shall they be,

When madness like a storm shall roll

Away, leaving illumination. Within everyone

The nearness has begun

Toward some loved life and toward the soul

Perceived therein: the elemental ache to be
made whole

With beauty and with love.— O I have ached
and longed in the embrace

Of one I love to be undone

Of differences, to yield and run

Within the very blood and being of my dear,

One body and one face,

One spirit in all space,

Mingled and indissoluble. And I have felt a
mortal tear

Smart on my lids, when I had been so near

To Celia that I knew not which was I,

Yet the day returned between us and the sky

Held distances no longer clear,

And we were two again that had been almost
one.

A mother yields herself to enter

Her child, who nestles close and sleeps

With all his wisdom pressed

For comfort to her breast.

I can remember my relinquishment

Of consciousness and care,

Almost of life, upon my mother's heart — the
 great content
Of being there.

And then I loved a starry boy of three,
Who looked about him, smiled and took to me,
Held out his arms and chose me among men
For his companion, to confide
His smiles in and to be
At ease with. Closely by my side
He sat and touched the world, to see
If it were solid and worth touching. When he
 died,
I too was dead . . . and yet I hear him say,
Laughing within my heart today:
“Lo, being you,
And having lived your years, this will I do,
And this, and this!”
 I have my boy again.
I greet him nearer than a kiss.

And so, from birth to death, out of confusion
The secret leaps
And creeps
From its eternal centre

In the soul.

Communion is the cause and the conclusion

And the unfailing sacrament

Not only of the mystical frequenter

Of temples, where the body of the dead

Creates divine

The living body through the bread

And wine,

But God discovers and discovers

His beauty in all lovers.

And, gradually whole,

Body and body, soul and soul, combine

His one identity with yours and mine.

I know a fellow in a steel-mill who, intent

Upon his labours and his happiness, had meant

In his own wisdom to be blest,

Had made his own unaided way

To schooling, opportunity,

Success. And then he loved and married.

And his bride,

After a brief year, died.

I went to him to see

If I might comfort him. The comfort came to
me.

“David,” I said, “under the temporary ache
There is unwonted nearness with the dead.”

I felt his two hands take

The sentence from me with a grip

Forged in the mills. He told me that his tears
were shed

Before her breath went. After that, instead
Of grief, she came herself. He felt her slip
Into his being like a miracle, her lip

Whispering on his, to slake

His need of her.—“And in the night I wake
With wonder and I find my bride

And her embrace there in our bed,

Within my very being, not outside!

. . . . We have each other more, much
more,”

He said, “now than before.

This very moment while I shake

Your hand, my friend,

Not only I,

But she is touching you — and laughs with me
because I cried

For her. . . . People would think me crazy if
I told.

But something in what you said made me bold
To let you meet my bride! ”

It was not madness. David's eye
Was clear and open-seeing.
His life
Had faced in death and understood in his
 young wife,
As I when Celia died,
The secret of God's being.

VII

Among good citizens, ever I praise
This woman whom I knew and know,
A citizen whom I have seen
Most heartily, most patiently
Making God's mind,
A citizen who, dead,
Yet shines across her white-remembered ways
As the nearness of a light across the snow. . . .
My Celia, mystical, serene,
Laughing and kind.

And still I hear among New Hampshire trees
Her happy speech
Of beauty's inmost reach.
And still I hear her voice announcing plain
The mystic gain
Of friends from adversaries and of peace from
 pain:
Beauty's control

Of every soul

Surrendering in victory.

. . . . Well I recall how she explained to me

With sunlight on her head

When last we looked, as many times before,

Over those hundred foothills rolling like the
sea.

“Where mountains are, door after door

Unlocks within me, opens wide

And leaves no difference in my heart,” she said,

“From anything outside.”

Not only Celia, speaking, taught me these

The tenets of her beauty; but her life was such

That I believed as by a palpable touch

That heals and tends.

Not better nor more learned nor more wise

In many ways than others of my friends,

Celia was happier.

Their excellencies and their destinies

Became, contributing, a part of her,

Anointed her awhile among all men

An eminent citizen,

A generous arbiter.

Not less bereaved than others of my friends,
Celia was lovelier.

And now, though something of her dies,
Her heart of love assembles and transcends
Laws, letters, personalities,
Beginnings, passages and ends.

Often I start and look beside me for the stir
Of her sweet presence come again.
I have cried out to her,
So vivid has begun
Some dear-remembered sentence in her voice.

If a deluded wakeful thrush,
Seeing a light in a window, sing to the sun,
Yet he shall soon rejoice;
When the great dawn of day
Opens a thousand windows into one.

On a path where thrushes wake — called
Celia's Way —
Time after time
She led me to her high dominion.
And always when I pass again our chosen
pine

And feel upon my brow the fine
Soft pressure of an unseen web and brush
It from my face expectantly and climb
Wide-eyed into the mountains' windy hush,
Among the green and healing hills
I have found Celia.
For the morning fills
With her and afternoon and twilight. She is
always there
As sweet within me as the intimate air.

We are together still in the deep solitude
Which is the essence of all companies,
Not in its loneliness but in its brood
Of presences, the dawn chanting with birds, the
trees

Translating unremembered memories
Of the returning dead.

And Celia, who has learned to die,
Is well aware — and so through her am I —
That, one by one interpreted,
All hopes and pains and powers
Are hers and mine to try
On every star, through every age.
. . . . And, still together, on this page

We quote the sun-dial of the sage:

"I number none but happy hours."

For we remember still

The morning-hymn we heard: "Go now, fulfill

Your destiny and joy,

Each in the other, both in that Italian boy

And he in you, like flowers in a hill."

She said to me one day, where a hill renewed
its flowers,

"How easy it would be to live and die

If we would only see the ultimate

Oneness of life, quicken

Our hearts with it and know that they who hate

And strike become the stricken!"

"A stranger might be God," the Hindus cry.

But Celia says, importunate:

"Everyone must be God and you and I."

VIII

Almost the body leads the laggard soul; bidding it see
The beauty of surrender, the tranquillity
Of fusion with the earth. The body turns to dust
Not only by a sudden whelming thrust,
Or at the end of a corrupting calm,
But oftentimes anticipates and, entering flowers
and trees
Upon a hillside or along the brink
Of streams, encounters instances
Of its eventual enterprise:
Inhabits the enclosing clay,
In rhapsody is caught away
On a great tide
Of beauty, to abide
Translated through the night and day,
And, by the anointing balm
Of earth, outgrows decay.

Hark in the wind — the word of silent lips!
Look where some subtle throat, that once had
 wakened lust,
Lies clear and lovely now, a silver link
Of change and peace!
Hollows and willows and a river-bed,
Anemones and clouds,
Raindrops and tender distances
Above, beneath,
Inherit and bequeath
Our far-begotten beauty. We are wed
With many kindred who were seeming dead.
Only the delicate woven shrouds
Are vanished, beauty thrown aside
To honor and uncover
A deeper beauty — as the veil that slips
Breathless away between a lover
And his bride.

So, by the body, may the soul surmise
The beauty of surrender, the tranquillity
Of fusion: when, set free
From semblance of mortality,
Yielding its dust the richer to endue

A common avenue
Of earth for other souls to journey through,
It shall put on in purer guise
The mutual beauty of its destiny.

And who shall fear for his identity
And who shall cling to the poor privacy
Of incompleteness, when the end explains
That what pride forfeits, beauty gains!

Therefore, O spirit, as a runner strips
Upon a windy afternoon,
Be unencumbered of what troubles you —
Arise with grace
And greatly go! — the wind upon your face!

Grieve not for the invisible transported brow
On which like leaves the dark hair grew,
Nor for the lips of laughter that are now
Laughing inaudibly in sun and dew,
Nor for the limbs that, fallen low
And seeming faint and slow,
Shall alter and renew
Their shape and hue
Like birches white before the moon
Or a wild cherry-tree
In spring or the round sea

And shall pursue
More ways of swiftness than the swallow dips
Among — and find more winds than ever blew
The straining sails of unimpeded ships!

A sudden music, Celia, through a poplar-
bough,
Where leaves are small and new,
Comes laughing and goes vanishing like you.

Beauty is more than hands or lips or eyes
Or the long curve that lies
Upon a bed waiting, more than the rise
Of sun among the birds, more than the oar that
plies
Under the moon for lovers, more than a tune
that buys
Pennies from time. Vision and touch comprise
Yesterday's promise, today's token
Of a fulfillment that shall have no need to be
perceived or spoken,
Wherein all love is the award
Poured upon beauty and no heart is broken
And no grief is stored.

For never beauty dies

That lived. Nightly the skies
Assemble stars, the light of many eyes,
And daily brood on the communal breath —
Which we call death.

Nothing is lost. Nothing I have of loveliness

Exceeds a minute part
Of my own loveliness when it shall be fulfilled
With Celia's and all stars that rise
In every heart.

All that I have is but the start
And the beginning, the bewildering guess
Of what shall be distilled
Out of my soul by you and you,
Each soul of all souls, till one soul remains
Which every beauty shall imbue
Clean of the differences and pains. . . .

I shall be Celia's everlastingness.

IX

A little hill among New Hampshire hills
Touches more stars than any height I know.
For there the whole earth — like a single being
— fills

And expands with heaven.

It is the hill where Celia used to go
To watch Monadnock and the miles that met
In slow-ascending slopes of peace.

She said: "When I am here, I find release
From every petty debt I owe,
The goods I bring with me increase,
The ills are riven
And blown away. And there remains a single
debt

Toward all the world for me,
A single duty and one destiny."

"There shall be many births of God
In this humanity,"

She said, "and many crucifixions on the hills,
Before we learn that where Christ trod

We all shall tread; and as he died to give
Himself to us, we too shall die — and live.”

“ Though slowly knowledge comes, yet in the
 birth
Is joy,” said Celia, “ joy
As well as pain:
The clear and clouded beauty of the earth.
. . . . This I forget in cities. For cities are a
 great
Impassable gate
Of tumult. But by mountains and by seas I gain
Path after path of peace.”

One evening Celia led me, late,
Among the many whispers before rain,
To touch and climb her hill again.
I felt it rise invisible as fate,
Not for the eye but for the soul to see.
And when at last, among the oaks, we came
Upon the top, a voice
Thrilled in the air like flame —
Was it uprisen death we heard?
Was it immortal youth,
Out of the body, witnessing the truth?
Was it the final word?

Blindly we listened to the singer, to that single
strain

Of joy.

And then the voice was still and all the world
and we —

Till "Run," she said, "and bring him back to
me!"

I ran, I called . . . but in the nearing rain,
No mortal answered, nothing stirred.

Was it uprisen death we heard?

. . . . Perhaps the hills and night
Had made a prophet of some happy boy,
And led him for a moment to rejoice
As never in his life before.

Perhaps he had his own delight

As well in silence as in song;

For, though we waited long,

He sang no more.

Afterward Celia said: "That voice we
heard

Singing among the oak-leaves, and then still,

We cannot answer how it sings or how it comes
and goes. . . .

But only that its beauty grows

Within us both, in ways no voice has told.
. . . . So let me be to you. When night has
drawn its fold
Of darkness and no word
May reach your heart from mine,
Take then my love, my beauty! Hear me still
When you are old
And I am ageless as a changing hill!
O hear me like that voice at night,
Clearer than sound, nearer than sight,
And let me be — as beauty is — divine! ”

There is a hill of hills
That holds my heart on high and stills
All other sound
Than joy.
Robins and thrushes, whip-poor-wills
And morning-sparrows sing it round
With echoes. Waterfalls abound
And many streams convoy
The breath of music. I have found
A hill-path rising sudden on a city-street,
Out of a quarrel, out of black despair,
And climbed it with my winged feet.
It hurries me above

All this illusion, all these ills,
It rises quickly to the shining air.
. . . . Celia, I hear you on the hill of hills,
Announcing love.

And O my citizen, perhaps the few
Whom I shall tell of you
Will see with me your beauty who are dead,
Will hear with me your voice and what it said!

Let but a line of mine,
A single one,
Be made to shine
With your whole-heartedness as with the sun,
And I shall so consign
Your touch to younger and yet younger hands,
That they shall carry beauty through more
lands
Than ever Helen laid her touch upon. . . .

O Celia, my direction
And my destiny,
Toward a new world I see
New immigrants arriving from new ships,
And I hear your laughter upon all their lips.

The greater part of this poem was delivered before the Harvard Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa Society in June, 1911; several passages from it have appeared in *Poetry*, and others in *The Bellman*, the Boston *Evening Transcript* and the *American Magazine*.

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